

ESP STUDENTS' SELF-REFLECTION ON ENGLISH SPEAKING ANXIETY: AN INVESTIGATION ON GENDER'S PERSPECTIVES

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Received: 5 June 2024

Accepted: 12 July 2024

Abstract

Speaking in a foreign language becomes a challenge for many students, including ESP students. In ESP class, the students learn English for specific context related to the professional fields. Thus, having anxiety in the English class could affect their future performance in their future job. The current study seeks for insight on identifying speaking anxiety awareness among ESP students through self-reflection. The students are required to describe on of the tourist attraction in front of the class and have a self-reflection on their performance. With the total of 15 male and 15 female students, the study employed a qualitative study with case study design. Classroom observation, questionnaires, and interview were conducted to obtained the data. Data triangulation was conducted by comparing the findings in various data collection process. To analyze the data, qualitative data analysis process was conducted through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The result of the current study showed that the male students tend to have speaking anxiety than the female students. Based on the male students' perceptions, pronunciation difficulty, lack of grammar comprehension, lack of vocabulary mastery, and lack of confidence become the cause of the speaking anxiety, while the female students have lack of practice, nervousness, and pronunciation difficulty as the problem. Thus, it is suggested the English lecturer to provide more practice on language system, such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation to shape students' comprehensibility on English. Also, the ESP students need to have extensive speaking practice to boost their confidence in speaking in front of the class.

Keywords: *ESP; gender; self-reflection; speaking anxiety*

INTRODUCTION

English as an international language spoken by professional. In the current globalization era,

most people in the world use English as a medium for communication (Suwartono, 2024). We cannot deny the fact that many technology tools and computerized or mobile application use English as its user language. In other words, it indicates that English has dominated most of daily needs on communication. Even, in current issue on professional industry, the capacity of English communication is seen as the level of professionalism in certain industries, i.e. tourism and business. Many companies even set certain level of English proficiency as the requirements in job application. Consequently, English is seen as a tool on achieving certain position and even could determine the financial success (Abdalgane, 2022).

To fulfil the needs of professional officers, vocational institutions are required to provide special needs in English. The lecturers need to focus on teaching the special terminologies, preferred words, and jargons used in a specific field (Salmani-nodoushan, 2020), which is called as English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Unlike academic English, in ESP, the students are not only demanded to learn the language system, such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, and language skills like speaking, listening, reading, and writing, but they also need to study the language context and language in use which could support their specialties (Ayuningtyas, 2020), i.e. handling check in, handling guest request, handling telephone, handling complaint, handling food order, etc. In ESP, the learning materials are set based on the scope of the work field taken (Bekteshi & Xhaferi, 2020), such as English for tourism, English for business, English for medical, English for engineer, etc. Moreover, the teaching and learning process in ESP is also different, in which emphasis more on speaking practice guided in a specific context. Therefore, different vocational institutions could provide varieties ESP for different majors.

In Indonesia, the students face challenges in learning ESP. As these students are native to Indonesian language, they still learn English as a foreign language. In prior observation, the English language is not commonly use in the community and the students have lack time and place to practice their language comprehension in daily praxis. Moreover, Indonesian language and English have different sentence structure which makes many students struggling in comprehending the English pattern. Then, the shift from academic English, that they have studied during their high school, also leads the students to face problem in acquiring new vocabularies. Different words and terminologies that they have used and applied in high school creates new barriers in practicing their English. Another common problem faced by students in learning English is speaking anxiety.

Speaking anxiety is a symptom commonly occurred when the students feel uncomfortable while speaking a foreign language (Akramy, 2020). Prior studies have identified some common behaviour appeared while students are having speaking anxiety, such as having a blank stare (Akramy, 2020), speaking in low voice (Anzanni & Dewi, 2022), or showing shyness and uncomforted gesture (Coppinger & Sheridan, 2022). Regarding the sources of the speaking anxiety, most of prior studies highlighted on the students' own perception. Pontillas and Talaue (2021) pointed the existence of prior problems during learning English or using English in speaking with limited communication skills could lead a student to have speaking anxiety. Different investigation result was also carried out by Miskam and Saidalvi (2018) who discovered that each students has their personal reasons of experiencing speaking anxiety, such as their belief, their negative perception toward their performance, their self-comparison to other students' performance, and, even, the lecturer's personality. Personal trait also plays an essential role on how the students perceive their performance and speaking anxiety (Bahrudin & Amir, 2018).

Beside of personal perception, other studies also unravel that students' English capacity also could lead the students to experience speaking anxiety, including their accent while speaking in foreign language (Coppinger & Sheridan, 2022) and their foreign language speaking fluency (Ayuni et al., 2021). Several anxiety studies in Indonesia also pointed out that Indonesian L2 learners of English experienced speaking anxiety and this could be attributed to fear of making mistakes (Andriani & Subekti, 2022; Glory & Subekti, 2021, 2022; Goram & Subekti, 2022), having strict teachers (Subekti, 2018), perceived lack of ability in pronunciation and peer comparison (Subekti et al., 2024).

Even though these are the common problems found in the classroom by the teacher or lecturer, in prior classroom observation, many ESP students did not recognize their own problems in learning English. Without any recognition on their learning problem, the ESP students could not realize their mistakes in using the target language or even their lack on speaking capacity. To help the ESP students recognize their learning problem, a self-reflection writing may be employed. Self-reflection writing is a writing activity conducted at the end of the meeting to reflect on personal learning progress. Through self-reflection, the students could share their perception toward the teaching and learning activity and express their feeling and emotion toward the learning process which they might not share it in spoken language, like Han and Md Yusof (2019) who found the reasons behind students' active participations in English class. They may also write any progress and mistakes that they have got through the learning process, e.g. reading problem (El-Badri & Abu-Baker, 2021), speaking problems (Jihan & Hendriwanto, 2021), listening problem (Rabbani & Sulistyaningrum, 2022), and writing problem (Widarni, 2023). By sharing the problems in learning with their teacher or lecturer, they could have further assistance to comprehend English capacity better.

Overviewing the negative impact of speaking anxiety toward ESP students' performance in speaking and the benefits of providing self-reflection writing activity in the classroom, the current study aimed at identifying the speaking anxiety awareness among the ESP students through self-reflection. The current study sought for problems faced by students as the negative impact of their speaking anxiety and investigated the possible causes leading the students to have speaking anxiety. Furthermore, gender-based problems identification was also conducted to gain deeper insight toward ESP students' speaking anxiety. That is because research suggested that gender could play a role in influencing individual differences (Subekti, 2022; Subekti et al., 2024). In line with the objectives of the study, the current study proposed two research questions:

1. How is the occurrence of speaking anxiety among the ESP students reflected on their self-reflection writing?
2. What are the causes of speaking anxiety among the ESP students based on their gender?

METHODS

Research design

The current investigation applied qualitative research with a snapshot case study design. This research design enables the study to limit the specific time period to identify multiple qualitative data through multiple data collection and data analysis techniques (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). By employing different data collection, the study could identify the speaking anxiety among ESP students more in depth and comprehensive.

Participants

The participants of the current study are 30 students at the fourth semester of Tour and Travel Operation Study Program in Politeknik Negeri Bali. They were enrolled in English for Tour Operation subject, with the distribution of 15 males and 15 females. These students have earned the basic skill of communication in Tour and Travel Operation context, including providing information related to tourist object, explaining tour package, creating tour promotion, explaining tour transportation, explaining travel policy handling tour reservation, handling tour rescheduling, handling tour cancellation, and handling tour complaint. Thus, the students have learned some special English terminologies in Tour and Travel Operation.

Instrument

In the current study, three instruments were employed to support the data collection process. The first instrument used is observation sheet. This sheet is employed to record the information regarding the actual phenomenon occurred during the teaching and learning process. In the observation sheet, the researcher took a note on the ESP students' certain acts or facial expressions, such as confused expression or long stare, while they were describing the tourist attraction in front of the class. Afterward, the questionnaire survey is employed as the second instrument. This instrument is used to collect the data regarding students' perspective. On the questionnaire survey, personal data were omitted only gender identification is applied.

Furthermore, the questionnaire only consists of two questions; the first question is in a form of close-ended question, identifying the ESP students' realization on their speaking anxiety, and the second question is in a form of open-ended question, identifying the factors of their speaking anxieties. Then, the third instrument employed in the current study is an interview guide. This instrument is employed to gain some confirmation and clarification toward ESP students' responses in the questionnaire which is ambiguous or unclear. In the interview guide, semi-structured interview questions are embedded which could be flexible depending on the case of each unclear or ambiguous statement made by the ESP students.

Data collection

In this study, the data collection was conducted with three techniques. The first technique was classroom observation. During the classroom observation, an on-site observation was applied in which enabled the researcher to gain authentic view on the ESP students' performance. The classroom observation was conducted in two meetings and the researcher attended both meetings to record the authentic situation felt by the ESP students during speaking activity. During the classroom observation, the researcher observed the ESP students' certain acts or facial expressions, such as confused expression or long stare, while they were describing the tourist attraction in front of the class. These expressions were then recorded on the observation sheet. After the second meeting was finished, at the end of the class, a self-reflection questionnaire was distributed to the ESP students. The ESP students were required to fill the form for 10 minutes and did self-reflection based on their personal experience while describing tourist attraction. There were two questions embedded in the questionnaire, the ESP students' realization on their speaking anxiety and the factors of their speaking anxieties. These questions were constructed in Indonesian language to allow the ESP students expressing themselves. After collecting the questionnaire result, the researcher selected some ESP students to be invited to an interview to clarify some of unclear statements on the open-ended question. In the interview, Indonesian language was employed to make the ESP students answer the question accurately.

Data analysis

The data analysis was conducted after the data collection. The data analysis was employed in two stages. The first stage was triangulation. In the triangulation process, the data from the classroom observation, questionnaire, and interview were compared to gain a comprehensive raw data. After the data triangulation, the study continued the analysis with the qualitative data analysis model (Miles et al., 2014). This data analysis process included data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. A descriptive statistic was also employed to calculate the frequency of the ESP students' answers. After analyzing the data, further interpretation was also made created to conclude the current phenomenon and also supported with prior studies to create a comprehensive discussion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The current study sought for insight on identifying speaking anxiety awareness among ESP students through self-reflection. The findings were gathered through classroom observation, questionnaire distribution, and interview. After the whole data were gathered, triangulated, analyzed, the current study identified two findings, including the speaking anxiety among ESP students and the causes of ESP students speaking anxiety based on gender.

Speaking Anxiety among ESP Students

Doing self-reflection could help the ESP students to recognize their weaknesses on English speaking. These ESP students have been aware of their current speaking anxiety. Based on the questionnaire, it was found that more than a half of the ESP students did not feel any speaking anxiety during describing the tourist attraction using English in front of the class (see Figure 1).

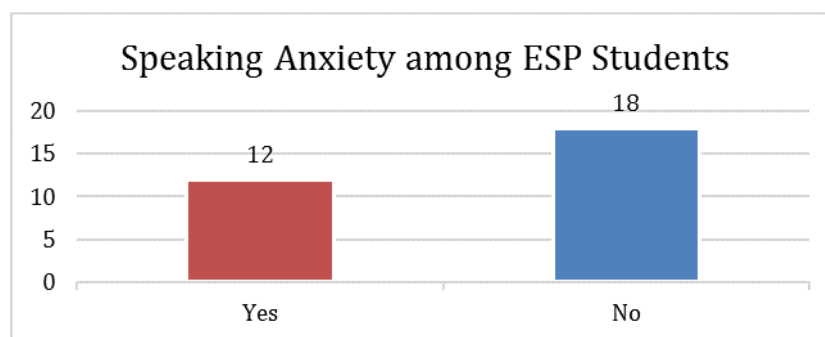


Figure 1. ESP Student's Speaking Anxiety (N=30)

Then, further identification was conducted to see the occurrences of the speaking anxiety among the ESP students based on gender. By unraveling the speaking anxiety among gender, it could help the English lecturer to address similar problem in the class and provide better solution for ESP students. From the analysis result, it was identified that male students tend to feel more anxious while describing the tourist attraction using English in front of the class (see Figure 2).

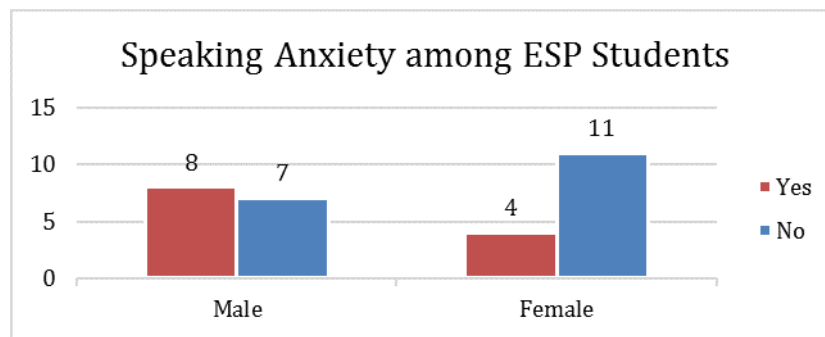


Figure 2. ESP Student's Speaking Anxiety Based on Gender (N=30)

Causes of ESP Students Speaking Anxiety

After identifying the speaking anxiety awareness among genders, the current study investigated the causes of ESP students speaking anxiety. Similarly, this investigation was also employed based on male and female students' perceptions. Based on the male ESP students' perceptions, pronunciation difficulty, lack of grammar comprehension, lack of vocabulary mastery, and lack of confidence become the cause of the speaking anxiety.

During the data collection, four students highlighted that he has a problem with his English pronunciation. Two of them admitted that having lack of proper pronunciation elevates his anxiety during speaking, whereas the other one admitted that lack of proper pronunciation made him nervous while speaking English. Then, another one also concerned on his pronunciation, but he has lack of vocabularies as well.

"There are several words that I felt difficult to pronounce and it made me worry before saying the words." [M3]

"One and only, sir, the pronunciation. It made me tense while speaking. I am afraid to make mistakes but I must speak." [M10]

"Because many English words are difficult to pronounce. It made me nervous, sir. I am afraid that some of my friends laughed while I am speaking." [M9]

"I got many words with difficult pronunciation. I want to change the words, but I don't know what to say, sir. So, I keep speaking, even though it is not right." [M1]

On the other hand, another student admitted on having problems in English structure. The lack of grammar mastery led him to face challenges to speak fluently in front of the class.

"When I speak English, I always keep silent for few seconds to think about the structure of the sentence. I am afraid that I made mistake on grammar since I know that my grammar is Indonesian grammar, not English." [M6]

Meanwhile, one student admitted that he has lack of vocabulary mastery and he did not know any similar-meaning words that he can use while speaking.

"Too many words in English that I don't know. I know the Indonesian language, but, when I translate it to English, I don't know what the correct word is. It makes me worry a lot. I am afraid that I get low grade." [M11]

The rest of the male students admitted to have lack of confidence. One of these students pointed on his fluency problem, meanwhile the other one emphasized on the classroom situation leading him to feel nervous.

"I am not confident with my English, sir. I know that I am not good in English and not fluent in speaking. I am afraid that my friends will laugh at me." [M8]

"I got nervous to speak in public sir. Probably, because I have lack of confidence and too many eyes looking at me, and it made me uncomfortable." [M15]

On the other hand, the female ESP students have nervousness, lack of practice, and pronunciation difficulty as their causes of speaking anxiety. During the investigation, two female ESP students mentioned that nervousness became a burden during the speaking assignment. One of them admitted that she focused on memorizing the content of her oral presentation, but turned blank while standing in front of the class. Meanwhile, the other female student mentioned that she did not get used to speak in public and it made her nervous which triggered her anxiety.

"I was totally nervous, sir. It is too difficult to memorize the whole text that I have prepared before. While sitting on my chair, I can remember everything, but, when I was in front of the class, suddenly I got blank, sir. A lot of my friends look at me and it makes me nervous." [F5]

"Maybe because I stand in front of many people. I am a person who gets nervous easily, sir. I did not use to speak in front of many people and it made me anxious, and sometimes I got panic attack. And, in the class before, I was totally speechless." [F14]

Meanwhile, one female ESP student admitted that she had lack of practice due to the limited time and realized it gave further impact on her performance.

"Maybe because I am not fully mastering the material. I don't have many times to practice the speaking assignment. Maybe this is my mistake." [F12]

Another female ESP student also mentioned that her lack of English capacity in pronouncing word made her worry and led to her anxiety. She also added that, with the bad pronunciation, she got fear of being laughed at by her peers.

"I felt my pronunciation is bad. Indonesian language and English' pronunciations are different and it makes me anxious. I am afraid that my friends will laugh at me." [F8]

From the ESP students' perspectives, both genders have similar cause on pronunciation difficulty and lack of confidence. Meanwhile, other causes which is not similar include the lack of grammar comprehension, lack of vocabulary mastery, lack of practice, and nervousness. It indicates that each gender has different potential cause which leads them into having speaking anxiety.

Discussion

The speaking anxiety becomes a common problem by students who are not a native speak-

er. The non-native ESP students, especially, deal with two cases; they need to understand the English rules in general, including the language system, such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, and they are also required to study specific terminology and jargon for their professional field. In the current study, the focus of the identification is the speaking anxiety among ESP students viewed on their gender through self-reflection.

Doing self-reflection could help the ESP students to recognize their weaknesses on English speaking. In the current study, most of the students realized that they have lacks of capacity in grammar (M6), vocabulary (M11), and pronunciation (M3, M10, M9, M1, F8). Besides, they also admitted that they have problems on their speaking confidence (M8, M15, F5, F14) and having less time to practice their speaking (F12). Through self-reflection writing, the students could elaborate their problems in speaking English. It made them recognized their own mistakes while performing, and rose their awareness on their speaking anxiety. It is in line with what has been discovered by prior study. The students tend to share their personal experience in facing the problems in certain learning activity through self-reflection writing, e.g. reading problem (El-Badri & Abu-Baker, 2021), speaking problems (Jihan & Hendriwanto, 2021), listening problem (Rabbani & Sulistyanningrum, 2022), and writing problem (Widarni, 2023).

In general, 12 from 30 ESP students (40%) admitted having speaking anxiety during their performance in front of the class. The number of speaking anxiety occurrences in this study is less than other studies which identified that all students felt the speaking anxiety during oral presentation (Almira et al., 2018). The low number of speaking anxiety occurrences may happen since the topic is quite familiar for the students. If the students have background knowledge on the topic, they tend to formulate ideas better (Fathikasari et al., 2022) which leads them to have less anxiety while speaking and raise their confidence level (Mouhoubi-Messadh & Khaldi, 2022). Identifying on their gender perspective, it was identified that male students tend to feel more anxious while describing the tourist attraction using English in front of the class. This phenomenon may be caused of the level of shyness among the students. Prior study had identified that female students have lower level of shyness than the male students which lead to better confidence in speaking (Long et al., 2019). Even though male students have higher number of speaking anxiety, they did not show certain acts or facial expressions, such as confused expression or long stare, during their performance. This fact is also supported by prior investigation which found that male students tend to hide their anxiety and did not show it directly during their performance (Almira et al., 2018). Thus, with the help of self-reflection writing, the male ESP students could express their uncomfortable feeling during their oral presentation or speaking performance.

Taking into further investigation, the current study has also identified the causes of ESP students speaking anxiety. The male ESP students admitted that the pronunciation difficulty, lack of grammar comprehension, lack of vocabulary mastery, and lack of confidence become the cause of the speaking anxiety, while the female ESP students admitted that lack of practice, nervousness and pronunciation difficulty as their causes of speaking anxiety.

The students' comprehension on English becomes the common causes of speaking anxiety among the ESP students. These ESP students admitted that they realized the cause of their speaking anxiety include the pronunciation difficulty, lack of grammar comprehension, and lack of vocabulary mastery. Pronunciation difficulty occurred since the pronunciation of Indo-

nesian language and English is quite different. As pronunciation matter, the ESP students start to worry mispronouncing the word and boost their speaking anxiety. If the words are pronounced incorrectly, it will lead to confusion as different pronunciation could lead to different meaning (Muslem et al., 2019). Besides, having lack of proper pronunciation also makes the students worry of being laughed by their peers in the classroom. This uncomfortable situation raises their speaking anxiety level and influence their speaking performance in front of the class, i.e. fears of being ridiculed and laughed at by their peers in the classroom (Mouhoubi-Messadh & Khaldi, 2022). Prior study also confirmed that accent and pronunciation differences could elevate students' speaking anxiety level as they feel embarrassed on pronunciation matter (Copping & Sheridan, 2022). Similar situation also occurred in prior studies which found that the uncomfortable feeling of being laughed by the peers makes the students overthink and leads them to experience speaking anxiety, i.e. in Arab (Alzamil, 2022) and Malaysia (Miskam & Saidalvi, 2018, 2019).

Similar to pronunciation difficulty, having lack of grammar mastery also makes the students speak unclearly during their performance. Without applying the proper grammar rule, the utterances may lead to misunderstanding between the students and the teacher (Muslem et al., 2019). This kind of situation was admitted influencing their speaking anxiety and makes them having pauses for several times to re-structure their utterances. This phenomenon is seen as a common tendency showed by non-native students who focus on grammar and structure more, rather than fluency (Akramy, 2020). It becomes their strategy to overcome any grammatical mistakes on their speaking, though raising their speaking anxiety.

Meanwhile, the lack of vocabulary mastery also becomes the cause of the speaking anxiety among the ESP students. During their performance, the ESP students admitted that they translate their utterances from Indonesian language to English and commonly, they got stuck as they could not find the proper word in the target language. The same method also occurred in prior study which identified that the students use translation technique in their speaking (Boustani, 2019). In fact, the words used in ESP class are slightly different since the ESP students are taught to use specialized terminologies related to their scope field (Salmani-nodoushan, 2020) and context related to professional communication (Irawan et al., 2018). With different terminology occurred, it may lead the students into confusion and tend to have problem in remembering the proper vocabulary (Mohtasham & Farnia, 2017). A similar case also occurred in a previous study which highlighted the correlation between vocabulary test result with foreign language speaking anxiety. In the study, high level of foreign language speaking anxiety results in low vocabulary test (Boustani, 2019). Therefore, vocabulary could contribute on students' speaking anxiety level (Batubara et al., 2022).

Other than the ESP students' comprehension on English, the psychological factors also influence their speaking anxiety. In this study, there are two causes of speaking anxiety related to the psychological factors, namely lack of confidence and nervousness. The lack of confidence among the ESP students influences their speaking anxiety during their performance. This phenomenon may be rooted from the low self-esteem as they admitted that they have low English comprehension, as what has been stated by the student. Similar phenomenon has also been identified in prior study which found that students with moderate and high speaking anxiety level perceived negatively on their English capacity and tend to admit in having low self-confidence level (Miskam & Saidalvi, 2018). The existence of negative perception and lack of

confidence is related to students' self-doubt on their English-speaking capacity (Mohtasham & Farnia, 2017) which leads them to feel anxious (Toubot et al., 2018). Another study also revealed that anxiety also occurred when a student has self-doubt on picking up the wrong word during the presentation (Wilang & Vo, 2018). Therefore, the students with lack confidence in themselves tend to suffer in speaking in front of the class (Mouhoubi-Messadh & Khaldi, 2022).

The second psychological factor influencing the speaking anxiety is nervousness. The ESP student admitted that the nervousness occurred when she stood in front of the class. The impact of nervousness makes her feel blank and brain freezes for a moment. This phenomenon occurred was also identified in another study which revealed that student's shyness level influences the nervousness level in English speaking (Al-Khotaba et al., 2019). This psychological matter leads the students to forget the content of their speaking and raise their anxiety level (Akramy, 2020). In another study, the nervousness occurred while speaking leads the students to confusion (Damayanti & Listyani, 2020). Another study also unraveled that symptom of nervousness during speaking could lead the students to feel they made more mistakes and perform weakly during their speaking performance (Elmenfi & Gaibani, 2016). Thus, having nervousness is not only raising the speaking anxiety level, but also give negative impact toward students' speaking performance.

Interestingly, lack of practice also becomes one of the causes of speaking anxiety unravel in this study. Independent practice is believed as an ultimate way to overcome the anxiety by the ESP student. The students could prepare the content of their speaking better and become more fluent in speaking by practicing in front of the mirror (Almira et al., 2018). It is in line with prior finding which mentions that having a proper practice could elevate students' preparation in speaking, making them be more prepared (Irawan et al., 2018) and more careful on their performance (Akramy, 2020). Having proper practice is also confirmed declining speaking anxiety level among students (Mohtasham & Farnia, 2017). In prior study, the students who have better preparation and practice tend to have low level on English speaking anxiety during their performance in the class ((Toubot et al., 2018). Therefore, ESP students should be encouraged to have better preparation and proper practice before having their speaking performance in front of the class.

CONCLUSION

Having a speaking anxiety may become a common problem for students who learn different language from their mother tongue. Many obstacles could be faced and it is the teacher's responsibility to help them overcome their challenges. Through self-reflection writing at the end of the class, the ESP students could elaborate their problems in speaking English and realized the existence of speaking anxiety inside them. In the current study, it was found that twelve students recognized their speaking anxiety while eighteen did not. From the twelve students, it is dominated by the male with eight students while the female is four students. Different causes of these ESP students' speaking anxiety was also unraveled based on their gender. The male students tend to admit the causes of their speaking anxiety are pronunciation difficulty, lack of grammar comprehension, lack of vocabulary mastery, and lack of confidence, whereas the female students admitted only on nervousness, lack of practice, and pronunciation difficulty. It indicated that the self-reflection writing could help the students to recognize their learning problem. Regarding the findings, different causes of each gender found need different treatment from the English teacher to overcome their speaking anxiety. It is suggested to English teacher

to conduct self-reflection activity to raise students' awareness on their learning problem so that they could overcome the obstacles in getting better learning result.

In accomplishing the study, it is recognized that there are some limitations of the study. First, the current study only took a small scope of participants. A larger scope of research is necessary to be conducted to see the bigger impact of having self-reflection writing in raising students' speaking anxiety awareness. Second, the study only took one field of ESP teaching and learning activity, which is English for tour operation. Different scope of ESP learning could lead to different results. Last, the current study took only one topic for the case study, which is describing tourist attraction. In describing tourist attraction, the students may find rare vocabularies or names of places which has different language from English or their mother tongue. Therefore, different learning topic may also influence the occurrences of speaking anxiety.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The current study was supported by the Tour and Travel Operation study program, Politeknik Negeri Bali.

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